Food Information Series
United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Information
Washington 25, D. C.

January 5, 1944 No. 74

Subject: The Farm Transportation Situation in 1944.

Field Distribution: War Board Members, AAA Committeemen, Extension Editors, BAE Analysts, FDA Marketing Reports Chiefs, SCS, FSA, FCA Regional Information Chiefs.

Suggested Use: Background information.

This year -- 1944 -- is going to be a critical period in the movement of farm products to market. The general farm machinery picture looks decidedly better in 1944 -- raw materials allocated being considerably larger than the amount allocated for farm machinery in the previous year. But the farm and over-the-road trucks that thread their way over countless country roads and main thoroughfares face a crisis in 1944. Obvious reason is that allied military operations require the lion's share of newly-made hauling vehicles of all kinds. There is no alternative to meeting that demand because when fighters land on a foreign shore they must take their transportation with them. In addition our allies, especially Russia, depend primarily on us for their transport vehicles.

What are the alternatives on the farms at home?

First, rigid maintenance. It is imperative that every farm truck, every truck that hauls for hire, be kept operating and used to the fullestextent possible. Motors must be kept in condition and tires will have to be reconditioned -- because there will not be enough to go around.

When maintenance is no longer practical then the alternative is for farmers to pool their rolling stock. They did a magnificient job of voluntary pooling on farm machinery in 1943, an experience that will be helpful in pooling the trucks that haul the foods and fibers to market.

A third factor that will alleviate the transportation strain only slightly is new equipment. There are enough heavy trucks, especially in the heavier classes, already authorized and in production for civilian use to provide a fairly high replacement ratio, but only 1,500 of the heavy-heavy trucks are scheduled for delivery in each of the first and second quarters (1944) and 2,734 for each of the third and fourth quarters. The light-heavy truck figures show 500 scheduled for delivery in the first quarter and 1,000 in the second quarter. The third and fourth quarter schedule of production is much better, provided axle and transmission facilities can be expanded sufficiently to meet the schedule of 6,424 for each of the third and fourth quarters. Medium trucks have a production schedule as follows: First quarter, 6,250; second quarter, 12,062; third quarter, 20,118; and fourth quarter, 20,120. All of the above trucks are scheduled for manufacture, and their production will be consolidated, with that of the military truck program and the Army will expedite their delivery the same as they expedite their own program.

The foregoing schedule of planned production totals about 81,000 trucks for civilian use and represents a "must" program of medium and heavy truck construction for 1944. It is dependent upon expansion of production facilities to produce

critical assemblies and components. It likewise depends upon the assembly and training of personnel to "man" these expanded facilities. Should the entire program be fulfilled in 1944, it is extremely doubtful if agriculture would get in excess of 25,000 to 35,000 and this represents roughly less than 20 percent of the anticipated needs of agriculture. No light trucks (1/2 ton, 3/4 ton and one ton) are now scheduled for production and agriculture's needs for this type of vehicle for service operations on the farm are heavy. The War Food Administration is emphasizing the necessity of making vehicles of this weight as soon as possible.

Actually, there are less than 15,000 trucks in the civilian stockpile remaining for all civilian purposes and only about 50,000 passenger cars. The combined truck program is a No. 2 "must" program on the War Production Board's critical list -- aircraft and landing craft being first. The full resources of the government are being mobilized to see that the above production schedules are met.

There is a fourth possibility which can, and probably will be a large factor in moving products from farms next year. That's the American farmers' ingenuity. He may be forced to rig up a trailer, pulling it behind his tractor, his truck, or even the family passenger car. Pickups, station wagons, any conceivable vehicle that can help move stuff rapidly will be put to use. There simply is no other way, according to the men in ODT, WPB & WFA whose job it is to wrestle with this almost impossible transportation dilemma.

Component parts for making these new trucks are the most serious problem confronting war programs today. Transmissions, axles, bearings, magnetos, brake shoes, springs, carburetors -- these and hundreds of others are often made in scattered plants, finally being assembled in the finished trucks. These items -- as spare parts -- go along with each military vehicle, thus aggravating the job of assembling finished trucks for civilian uses. And, in the factories where such parts are made, manpower pinches production schedules.

Under the circumstances, trucks have two high-priority destinations -- the military operations and the movement of foods and farm crops. The military comes first. Wholesale food distribution has received about one-fifth of the number of trucks allocated to agriculture. This is in addition to farm trucks and the trucks allocated for agricultural service such as hauling milk, hogs, cattle and other farm products.

At present about 35 percent of the trucks allocated for civilian use and about 13 percent of passenger cars are going to agriculture. How thin this stream is can be seen by comparison with 1941 when more than 194,000 farmers bought trucks -- new and used. In the six years 1936-41, we built an average of 750,000 trucks a year, including export vehicles. We're building many more than that now, but mostly for military operations all over the world. Every new area in which our troops land means more transportation requirements, from Alaska to the South Seas; from Panama to the Russian front.

The trucking situation may be particularly critical for the dairy industry which depends so much on rubber-equipped vehicles. Every farmer, milk plant operator and hauler of dairy products should get so organized that, if he has a temporary breakdown with his own vehicles, he will not be left stranded. Wherever possible, pooling arrangements should be made, particularly during the flush spring season.

Rubber Tires

On the nation's farms there are: 1,100,000 trucks; 4,250,000 automobiles; 1,500,000 trailers; 1,900,000 tractors; 3 to 3 1/2 million wagons, plus other rubber mounted farm implements. These vehicles and machines, along with other pieces of equipment, constitute the main portion of agriculture's fleet of rubber-using vehicles. Providing the necessary rubber to keep them rolling -- to keep farm products and farm supplies moving -- will be another tight spot in farm transportation in 1944. After having been virtually on a tire starvation diet for two years since Pearl Harbor, we go into the year under the necessity of continuing chiefly on a maintenance basis, for the third consecutive year.

A year prior to the war, there were distributed in the United States approximately 50 million tires of passenger car sizes. During 1943, at the end of two years of rigid tire rationing, there had been distributed approximately 17,200,000 tires of passenger car sizes. These tires, however, will be the equivalent in service of only about 12,000,000 new tires. The reason for this is that the passenger car tires sold in 1943 were largely new synthetic tires, war tires made of reclaimed rubber, used tires and emergency tires, hence un-equal in service to those made before Pearl Harbor.

Truck and bus tires are one of the serious problems facing this country. Overloading and, in many cases, higher-than-recommended speeds already have taken a serious toll of these tires. New tires cannot be produced in sufficient quantity in the immediate future to prevent an extension of the present shortage. The requirements of the Armed Forces absorb the first and largest percentage of new production. It is not the supply of synthetic rubber that will limit the making of the large sizes of tires but the shortage of crude rubber, manpower, the shortage high-tenacity rayon cord, and the current lack of adequate facilities in the industry, i.e., mills, calenders, tire-building equipment, vulcanizers, and special large sized molds. Today, the industry is making many of these large tires from the same materials it always has used but more synthetic will be used in 1944.

To bridge the crisis in domestic transportation which this situation implies and keep their industry in operation, the truck and bus industry must cooperate as never before. Overloading and speeding, especially on hot pavements, must be eliminated, and every tire carcass which can be saved by recapping must be so preserved. The length of time during which truck and bus operators can successfully do their job will depend upon the care given their tires.

A farmer may establish eligibility for a farm tractor or farm implement tire, and also, in view of the shortage of such tires, when farm tractor or implement tires themselves are not available, he may secure a Grade III passenger tire for the front wheels or a used truck tire for the rear wheels. There are no restrictions on the recapping of farm tractor tires and facilities for this are being expanded.

The holder of an "A" gasoline ration book is entitled to a used tire only if he can show that part of his driving is occupational. The "B" book holder throughout the country can get a certificate for a used or emergency tire, but no longer can he get a new tire. Only those whose gasoline ration permits them to drive 601 miles or more per month can get new tires. There are no restrictions on passenger tire recapping.

The next six to nine months will be the most difficult. The effect of a global war, the past two years of wear and tear upon existing tires and the necessity, in order to save crude rubber, of building only military and a few most essential civilian tires has emphasized the scarcity of tires. The inventories of tires built up in times of peace have now been drawn down to an irreducible minimum; the requirements of the military forces are tremendous and have increased materially, and while new production will increase, it will have to wait for the gradual installation and manning of the expansions of other programs. A shortage of rayon tire cord has required, and continues to require, an excessive use of crude rubber. In the meantime, the greatest conservation must be maintained. For a long time to come, recapped tires must continue to carry much of the transportation burden.